

# Greg Abbott's Educating Texans Plan: *Governance*

## List of Recommendations

### Governance

Recommendation: Establish genuine local control by giving school districts operational flexibility over their schools and by empowering families to make meaningful educational choices.

### *Encourage parental engagement through transparency*

Recommendation: To encourage parental engagement, require campuses to publish a campus report card, which includes the campus A through F rating, financial efficiency rating, and parental campus preferences on their website homepages.

Recommendation: To obtain greater parental involvement, and to provide helpful information to districts about parental perceptions, public school enrollment forms should allow parents to express their campus preference, and publish those preferences.

Recommendation: Create a transparency system in which all school districts and campuses must make capacity of their facilities and their current student enrollment publicly available.

Recommendation: Establish the A through F school district rating system at the campus level.

Recommendation: Require school campuses to publish their FAST financial efficiency results.

### *Encourage parental engagement through empowerment*

Recommendation: Strengthen parents' ability to petition the Commissioner of Education to change campus management.

Recommendation: Create a Texas Achievement School District as a method by which failing elementary school campuses can be improved.

**Classroom and Campus Leadership**

*Encourage effective teaching*

Recommendation: Ensure that bonuses paid to school districts for passing scores on AP and IB exams are transferred directly to teachers.

Recommendation: Support UTeach and similar programs that endeavor to recruit and prepare STEM majors for the teaching profession.

Recommendation: Increase appropriations to TEA that support the Teach for America program.

Recommendation: Create Reading-to-Learn Academies for professional educators in the fourth and fifth grades with a curriculum focused teaching strategy to improve comprehension across all subjects.

*Support effective principals through professional development*

Recommendation: Provide for a public education campus leadership program to train principals and other campus leadership staff.

# Background of Recommendations

## Governance

Governance is about *who* decides how schools operate and where children go to school. Much of this decision-making ought to be done at the local level by parents, teachers, and school officials. However, in recent decades, Texas' public education system has become highly centralized. Local school districts are subjected to numerous state mandates and dozens of regulatory impediments enshrined in 31 chapters of the Education Code. Although the Texas Education Code allows for open enrollment in public schools, as a practical matter, parents are required to send their kids to certain public schools chosen by school administrators.<sup>1</sup>

Students, parents, teachers, and principals must come first when making policies that affect our public education system. The improvements necessary for making the Texas public education system number one in the nation will only come about if trust is placed squarely with parents, teachers, and principals to do what is best for students. Succinctly stated in a study for the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), “[e]ducating our youth is a state responsibility but a local function. Attempts to run the schools from Austin and Washington will result in a further decline in the local sense of ownership and responsibility at the very time when local involvement is most needed.”<sup>2</sup>

There are 31 chapters in the Texas Education Code that govern the public education system through a plethora of regulations and mandates. As a result of this seemingly endless array of regulations and mandates, there is very little leeway for meaningful decision-making at the school district-level, much less the family level.

Efforts to bring more efficiency to public education are hampered because the current system is not structured to measure its own efficiency. However, recent studies by the Office of the Comptroller and by other experts have begun to shed light on the vastly disparate performance of school districts across the state, demonstrating the disconnect between expenditures on public education and the outcomes. The Office of the Comptroller's investigation of public school resource allocation found that some districts were spending much more than others to achieve the same outcomes. These results have been borne out by independent analyses.<sup>3</sup>

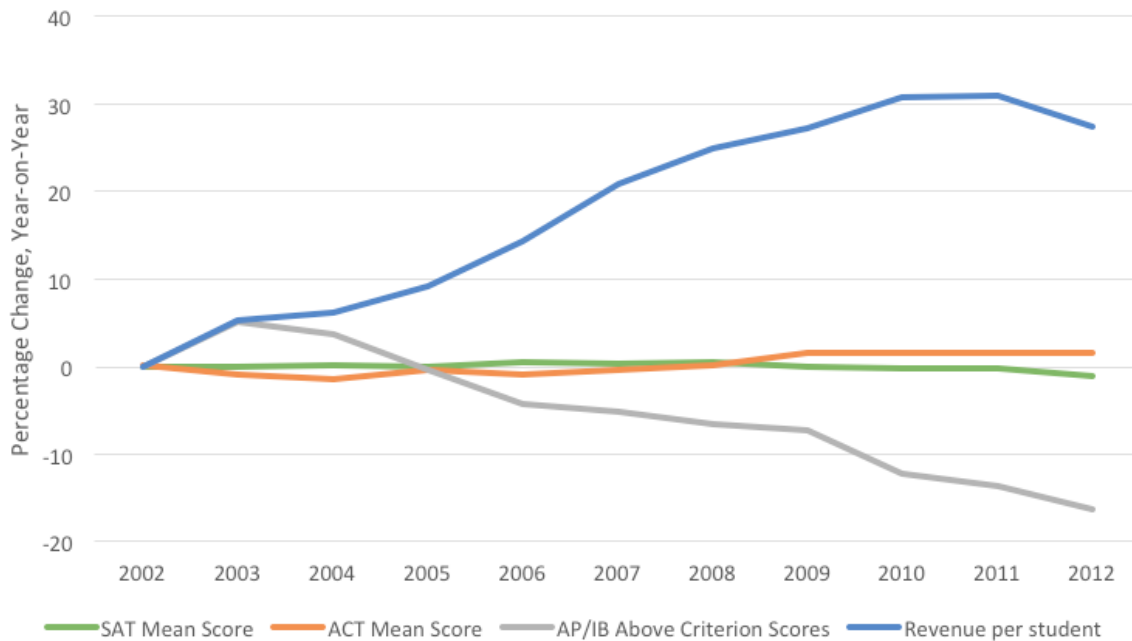
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<sup>1</sup> Texas Education Code (TEC) §25.001

<sup>2</sup> “Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas,” Public Education Visioning Institute and Texas Association of School Administrators, May 2008. <http://www.tasanet.org/cms/lib07/TX01923126/Centricity/Domain/111/workinprogress.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, the work of the Education Resource Group.

### Cumulative Changes in Texas Education Spending and Academic Outcomes, 2002 - 2012



Source: Education Resource Group

Genuine local control and parental engagement go hand-in-hand. Meaningful reform of Texas’ public education system will be multifaceted, but must have local flexibility, student achievement and parental engagement at its core. Our system of governance needs to evolve into one where schools are accountable to families, and educators are freed to deliver outstanding results for those families. The system of “upward accountability, downward control between districts and the state” needs to change into a system of “downward accountability, upward control between districts and families.”

Recommendation: Establish genuine local control by giving school districts operational flexibility over their schools and by empowering families to make meaningful educational choices.

The scale and complexity of the public education system must be reduced, and that means that decision-making in Austin must be reduced. School districts should be freed from many state regulations governing their day-to-day operations in exchange for empowering parents with useful information.

As decision-making becomes more centralized, as it has in Texas' public education system, creating and implementing effective reforms becomes more difficult. As the system becomes increasingly concentrated, more one-size-fits-all solutions are implemented. Often these one-size-fits-all solutions are inadequate and ill-adapted for schools, teachers, parents, and students. The current centralized system makes it more difficult for governing bodies to be accountable and for stakeholders to be able to hold those governing bodies accountable. Genuine local control is imperative to correct this system in order for stakeholders to be able to hold those governing bodies accountable.

Genuine local control can be accomplished, in part, by transferring authority to parents, teachers and principals. In this context, accountability and, ultimately, better academic outcomes can be achieved by allowing families to distinguish between public schools that have been given the flexibility to best meet the needs of their local community. In many cases, there will be different approaches to meeting those needs, which is why giving parents more information is important.

Schools and school districts must have the freedom to respond to the preferences and demands of families and students. One-size-fits-all mandates imposed by the Legislature hamstring the ability of schools to operate with any meaningful degree of flexibility.

In fact, the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA) and the Texas Association of School Boards (TASB) produce a biennial report detailing the numerous state mandates with which school districts are required to comply.

As a report by the Public Education Visioning Institute, published by the Texas Association of School Administrators opines:

[The types of schools we need] are free of bureaucratic structures that inhibit multiple paths to reaching goals. Reliance on compliance is minimized, and generating engagement through commitment is the primary means to achieving excellence. Leadership at all levels is honored and developed.<sup>4</sup>

While we do not take a position on any of the specific mandates included in these reports, the reports indicate that school boards and administrators in Texas believe returning meaningful control to school districts would reverse the decades-long trend of centralization. This proposal is simply intended to allow schools a greater amount of flexibility over their operations and how they meet their educational goals. Management decisions are best made at the local level, free of centralized regulations that hamper the goal of making Texas' public school system the best in the nation.

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<sup>4</sup> "Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas," Public Education Visioning Institute, published by the Texas Association of School Administrators, May 2008.

Centrally-driven mandates hamper the ability of school districts to govern themselves effectively at the local level. As stated by TASA and TASB, “[a]ny understanding of the rising costs of public education must include an appraisal of the current requirements that school districts must meet in order to comply with state laws and regulations.”<sup>5</sup>

Therefore, all school districts should have the option to exempt themselves from certain state mandates that govern the details of how districts make day-to-day operating decisions such as:

- calendars and schedules; (TEC §25.081-25.084)
- facilities management; (TEC Ch. 46)
- transportation; (TEC Ch. 34)
- procurement; (TEC §44.031) and,
- food and beverage service.

With this new freedom, districts may devise individualized operational plans that are more responsive to the needs and the aspirations of their students, parents, teachers, and principals. Meanwhile, the state will continue to hold school districts accountable for educational outcomes.

Before opting-out of state mandates, school districts must engage in a public consultation process with parents, teachers, and students, and may only exempt themselves from these mandates upon a majority vote of the board of trustees, following a period of planning and discussion with local parents.<sup>6</sup>

### **Encourage parental engagement through transparency**

The second part of transferring more control to the local level is to ensure that parents have easy access to important information regarding campus and district performance.

Chapter 26 of the Education Code, entitled “Parental Rights and Responsibilities,” notes that parents should be “partners with educators, administrators, and school district boards of trustees in their children's education.”<sup>7</sup> However, Chapter 26 does not go so far as to outline how that should occur. School districts must encourage parental involvement and responsibility by providing parents and families with information on each school within the district, so that parents can make informed decisions regarding their child’s education.

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<sup>5</sup> “Report on School District Mandates: Cost Drivers in Education,” TASA and TASB, January 2013.

<http://www.tasb.org/Legislative/Legislative-Information/Legislative-Reports/2013/documents/mandates2013.aspx>

<sup>6</sup> And, of course, schools cannot exempt themselves from laws such as those related to the health and safety of students and employees, as well as standard provisions related to public entities such as open meetings and open records statutes, and federal law.

<sup>7</sup> TEC §26.001

Recommendation: To encourage parental engagement, require campuses to publish a campus report card, which includes the campus A through F rating, financial efficiency rating, and parental campus preferences on their website homepages.

Parental involvement is an essential ingredient to a successful education system. Parents must be encouraged to actively participate in the education of their children, so that public education can truly be a partnership between students, parents and teachers. Elevating Texas' public education system to be the best in the nation will require significant involvement from parents, interacting with educators and local school boards and administrators to ensure schools are being held accountable for meeting academic standards.

The state, primarily through the Texas Education Agency (TEA) and the Comptroller of Public Accounts (CPA), compiles and publishes information regarding school districts and campuses. This information can, theoretically, be used by parents to facilitate informed decision-making on behalf of their school-aged children. In practice, however, the information is buried deep within TEA's accountability system and requires significant navigation through the TEA website in order to access information relevant to a particular school campus. Similarly, and despite recent improvements to the way the Office of the Comptroller's school system data is presented, understanding the information contained in the Comptroller's Financial Allocation Study for Texas (FAST) report requires a significant understanding of the process used to rate school districts and campuses.

For school district and campus information to be truly transparent, it must be readily accessible and easily understood by parents and families. The best way to achieve this level of transparency is to require schools to publish the following information on the front page of the school website:

- The A through F campus rating;
- FAST financial efficiency rating at a campus;<sup>8</sup>
- The percentage of enrolled students whose families chose that campus as their first preference; and,
- The percentage of enrolled students in 3rd and 5th grade who are performing at grade level in reading and math, based on statewide assessments already required for these grades (this information would only be required of K-5 campuses).

The information should be presented in the form of a "campus report card", that is presented prominently and in a uniform way on the front page of every school website. Visitors to a school's website should not have to click or scroll to find this information; it should be immediately available at the top of the home page. See an example of what the campus report card might look like below:

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<sup>8</sup> See: <http://www.fastexas.org>

<sup>8</sup>The Financial Allocation Study for Texas (FAST) stems from the 2009 Legislature's House Bill 3, which directed the Comptroller of Public Accounts to "identify school districts and campuses that use resource allocation practices that contribute to high academic achievement and cost-effective operations." HB 3 passed the Senate 31-0, and the House 143-0.

TEXAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*Texas Independent School District*

**B**

[CLICK HERE FOR A DETAILED EXPLANATION OF TEA'S A-F CAMPUS RATING SYSTEM](#)

VERY HIGH ACADEMIC PROGRESS  
**AT OR ABOVE 88%**  
OF ALL CAMPUSES

★ ★ ★ ★ ★  
**FAST RATING**  
**5.0**

VERY LOW SPENDING COMPARED  
TO FISCAL PEERS  
**\$7,600**  
COST-ADJUSTED SPENDING PER PUPIL

**65%** OF 3RD GRADERS  
**70%** OF 5TH GRADERS  
ARE READING AT GRADE LEVEL

**69%** OF 3RD GRADERS  
**73%** OF 5TH GRADERS  
ARE AT GRADE LEVEL IN MATH

**40%** OF ENROLLED STUDENTS PREFER THIS CAMPUS  
OVER OTHER CAMPUSES IN THE DISTRICT

FOR MORE DETAILS ON THESE MEASURES,  
PLEASE CONTACT YOUR CAMPUS ADMINISTRATION AT 555-555-5555.

Recommendation: To obtain greater parental involvement, and to provide helpful information to districts about parental perceptions, public school enrollment forms should allow parents to express their campus preference, and publish those preferences.

The Texas Education Code allows a school district to enroll a public school student at any campus operated by the school district. The Code further makes clear that “the board of trustees of a school district ... may assign and transfer any student from one school facility or classroom to another within its jurisdiction.”<sup>9</sup> From these two statutory provisions, it is clear that school districts are authorized to operate their public school systems on an “open-enrollment” basis, under which they offer families a choice of schools for their children to attend. Garland ISD’s “Choice of School” program is an example of such an open-enrollment system. GISD describes its open-enrollment program as follows:

<sup>9</sup> TEC §25.031.



GISD employs a “Choice of School” program, allowing parents to select the campus they want their children to attend for the subsequent school year. The selection period takes place during the spring semester. Although our goal is to grant everyone’s choice, various factors play a role in the final outcome of matching students with campuses: overcrowding in schools, walk zones, transportation zones, sibling rules, family preferences.<sup>10</sup>

As noted above, public school choice is a critical component of giving control of education to the parent. Which means, in part, that the state should simply ensure that families are able to express their preferences to school districts as a method to send a clear signal to their school district of which campuses are in high demand.

Some parents will prefer the school to which their children are already assigned; other parents may prefer a different school. Either way, a stated preference will send a strong market signal as well as information that will help administrators in formulating the campus programs that best align with parental preferences. This is another way of gaining the parental participation component that is essential to establishing quality schools. Allowing families to express campus preferences each year is a way to allow parents to share information with the school district, which would in turn allow the district to respond to that information in a variety of ways. Responses could include increasing capacity at high-demand campuses, giving families the opportunity to provide feedback explaining their preferences, or instituting an open-enrollment model similar to that operated by Garland ISD (described above).

To facilitate this shift, during the annual public school enrollment process, each school district should allow families to list their top-three choices of school for their child. School districts will not be compelled to act on the information, but it may create an incentive for school districts to assign as many children as possible to their first-choice campus. Transfer policies will continue to be a local decision.

Once the enrollment process is complete, the information would be included in the “campus report card” of each campus, which will be prominently placed on the front page of the school website. Each school district will then de-identify information relating to parental preference and final enrollment information and transmit the information to TEA. This may assist the agency by providing an early indication that there are potential problems at campuses which have been noted at the local level, but may not yet be apparent at the state level.

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<sup>10</sup> [http://www.garlandisd.net/departments/student\\_services/choiceofschool](http://www.garlandisd.net/departments/student_services/choiceofschool)

**Recommendation:** Create a transparency system in which all school districts and campuses must make capacity of their facilities and their current student enrollment publicly available.

School districts should be required to list the current capacity for every campus compared to its enrollment, so that parents are more informed about their neighborhood schools, particularly when deciding whether or not to transfer their child. This information may also show which schools are more preferred and which are less preferred, which in turn, can lead to targeted improvements.

Additionally, this information will inform not only schools and parents but also voters about school capacity or vacancy and the need (or lack thereof) for new facilities. When bond elections arise, voters will be able to make an informed choice by comparing debt versus current state of facilities when voting for new bonds for school districts. As it stands today, voters might issue new bond debt with no way of knowing whether standing facilities would be sufficient.

This recommendation will have the additional benefit of ensuring that parents are informed about the limits involved in choosing a different school for their child, as a school at full capacity will not accept additional students. Since schools cannot take additional transfers if they have reached capacity, parents can make a more informed decision before starting the transfer process.

**Recommendation:** Establish the A through F school district rating system at the campus level.

During the last legislative session, lawmakers passed legislation creating an A through F rating system for school districts across Texas.<sup>11</sup> The purpose of the new rating system is to “make it easier for the public to understand how a district [is performing].”<sup>12</sup> This replaced the previous district rating system that identified each school district or charter school as being either “exemplary,” “recognized,” “acceptable,” or “unacceptable.” However, this prior rating system is still in place at the campus level.

As filed, House Bill 5 would have required the commissioner of education to adopt rules to evaluate school district and campus performance and assign each district and campus a rating of A, B, C, D, or F; however the provision establishing an A through F rating system for campuses was removed prior to the bill’s final passage. District ratings are not as meaningful to parents as are campus ratings, and in large districts where campus quality varies, they can even be quite misleading. Accordingly, an A through F rating system is needed at the campus level as well.

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<sup>11</sup> House Bill 5 (2013, 83R).

<sup>12</sup> House Research Organization, analysis of House Bill 5 (2013).

Many states have implemented an A through F rating system for individual campuses with great success. Florida has tracked campus grades since 1999, making it easy for parents and administrators to chart a school's progress or regression.<sup>13</sup> The Indiana Department of Education has also implemented such a system, noting that, "[t]he greatest benefit of the A through F school grading system is heightened community awareness and increased dialogue and action among education stakeholders."<sup>14</sup> New Mexico adopted an A through F campus rating system in 2011 and issued its first round of grades based on 2010-11 performance.<sup>15</sup>

Parents and students are able to easily understand the A through F system. Families deserve a simple and accessible rating system through which they can judge the performance, not of just their school districts, but of each individual school and campus within their district. Put simply, a student does not attend a district or learn at a district, so a district rating is of less value to a parent than a campus rating. This type of campus level accountability is a critical part of ensuring that parents are armed with the information they need in order to be actively involved in the public education system in an effective way.

Importantly, by identifying schools by letter grade, school districts and campus leaders can more appropriately determine how to assist individual campuses. For schools that are most in need of help, parents, along with local, state and community leaders can immediately work together to provide the schools with assistance, support, and direction so that students at the school can be just as successful as students at other schools. Further, all school districts receiving less than an "A" will be motivated to improve their student achievement and outcomes. This motivation may not exist to the same degree when nearly every campus is labeled with the exact same "met standard."

Finally, the A through F campus rating must be included in the "campus report card" of the campus, which will be prominently placed on the front page of the school website.

**Recommendation:** Require school campuses to publish their FAST financial efficiency results.

Developing a financial efficiency component for rating schools is a critical part of developing an efficient public education system, as well as one in which parents, students, and policy makers are able to make meaningful comparisons between various schools and school districts.

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<sup>13</sup> See: "School Grades, Basic Information on Schools." <http://schoolgrades.fldoe.org>

<sup>14</sup> "A-F School Accountability F.A.Q.," Indiana Department of Education. <http://www.svcs.k12.in.us/Downloads/revise-d-f-faq-101712.pdf>

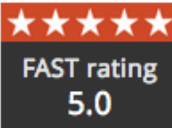
<sup>15</sup> NM Public Education Department: <http://webapp2.ped.state.nm.us/SchoolData/SchoolGrading.aspx>

Chapter 39 of the Texas Education Code contains some basic parameters for school district financial efficiency. TEA is required to review the solvency of school districts; school districts must submit basic financial management reports to TEA on an annual basis, and school districts must post their adopted budgets online for public review. Chapter 39 also directs TEA, in partnership with the Office of the Comptroller of Public Accounts, to “identify school districts and campuses that use resource allocation practices that contribute to high academic achievement and cost-effective operations.”<sup>16</sup> This requirement has resulted in the Comptroller’s biannual report, “Financial Allocation Study for Texas” (FAST).

FAST ranks every school district in the state based on how productively they use the money that is allocated to them. Productivity is used as a measure of educational outcomes weighted against the amount of money that each district receives on a per student basis.<sup>17</sup> As a result of this report, legislators, school districts, and the general public have ready access to a wealth of data concerning the relative productivity of each school district in the state.

FAST ranks school districts based on their weighted academic and financial performance, giving each district a score between one (worst) and five (best). 1,136 school districts were ranked in the latest report (covering the 2010 school year). Of these, 142 districts achieved a score of either 5 or 4.5 and were therefore identified in the report as being the state’s top school districts in terms of weighted academic and financial performance. See an example below:

## Galena Park ISD

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| <p>22,012 students<br/>Harris County, Region 04<br/>2012-2013 TEA Rating: Met Standard</p> |  | <p>very high academic progress<br/>at or above 88 % of all districts</p> <hr style="border: 0.5px dotted black;"/> <p>very low spending compared to fiscal peers<br/>\$7,667 cost-adjusted spending per pupil</p> |
|--|---|---|

*Source: FAST Report<sup>18</sup>*

The first step towards encouraging schools to spend taxpayer dollars efficiently is ensuring that information regarding per pupil spending at the campus level is carefully analyzed and made available to the public. The Comptroller’s FAST report already examines resource allocation at the campus level, adjusting for geographic and demographic factors that impact spending.<sup>19</sup> This allows for spending comparisons between “peer” campuses. According to the Comptroller, “in order to make spending comparisons as fair as possible, FAST assigns each campus and district up to 40 fiscal peers. Fiscal peers are identified based on their similarity across a number of variables, including enrollment, grades served, student need and labor costs, among others.”<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> TEC §39.0821(a).  
<sup>17</sup> Tex. Ed. Code §39.0821  
<sup>18</sup> <https://mycpa.cpa.state.tx.us/fast/single/101910/district.do#>  
<sup>19</sup> <http://www.fastexas.org/about>  
<sup>20</sup> <http://www.fastexas.org>

The FAST report campus rating should be included in the “campus report card” of each campus, which will be prominently placed on the front page of the school website. “Peer” campus information should also be extracted from FAST and made readily accessible from the “campus report card” of each campus so that parents and families will be able to easily determine how that particular campus scored and how the campus fared relative to other “peer” campuses with similar demographics.

### **Encourage parental engagement through empowerment**

Parental involvement is absolutely essential to a child’s academic success. Parents must have some avenue to not only be informed about - and involved in - their child’s education, but also have some meaningful control over their child’s education.

Recommendation: Strengthen parents’ ability to petition the Commissioner of Education to change campus management.

No child should be stuck in an under-performing school; no parent should be powerless to improve their child’s school. In order for Texas to be the best state for education, parents must demand excellence from their schools; parents cannot demand excellence however, if they are powerless to do anything about failure. Texas should empower parents with means to improve their schools. Under current law, parents of a majority of the students enrolled at the campus are able to petition the Commissioner of Education to repurpose, close, or place a campus under alternative management. However, parents may only exercise this option after a campus has been rated “academically unacceptable” for five consecutive years, three of which must include a process of “campus improvement” that is orchestrated under existing campus leadership.<sup>21</sup> The most obvious problem with this five-year period is that most students will have passed through a school in this timeframe, which makes it very unlikely that parents will actually pursue the parental petition route since their own children will no longer benefit directly.

Instead of this laborious and bureaucracy-laden process, parents of a majority of students enrolled at the campus should be allowed to petition the Commissioner after a school has been identified with a rating of “F” for at least two consecutive years. As under current law, parents should be able to petition the Commissioner to express a preference for repurposing, closure, or new management of the campus and the Commissioner should be required to give weight to this parental preference in determining the best way to improve performance at the campus.

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<sup>21</sup> Section 39.107 of the Education Code provides for “reconstitution” of a campus that has been rated academically unacceptable for two consecutive years via a “targeted improvement plan”. If, following three years of the targeted improvement plan, the campus is still rated academically unacceptable, the Commissioner is required to either repurpose, close, or place the campus under alternative management. Parents are authorized to petition the Commissioner to express a preference as to which of those three options should be pursued.

Recommendation: Create a Texas Achievement School District as a method by which failing elementary school campuses can be improved.

A Texas Achievement School District (ASD) is an innovative reform aimed at addressing the problem of poorly performing schools in Texas, and it does so without imposing any significant fiscal impact on the state. The current procedure through which TEA addresses failing schools “requires a variety of actions to be taken for a low-performing campus, such as the reconstitution, repurposing, alternative management, or closure of the campus...these measures have been utilized in conjunction with campus improvement plans and campus intervention teams with varying results.”<sup>22</sup>

The ASD model would be intended to create a swift, automatic process under which the very worst schools would be removed from the control of their local school districts each year and placed under management of the ASD, which specializes in the task of improving failing schools. In Louisiana, for example, the Recovery School District (RSD) model has resulted in more than 60 percent of schools exiting academically unacceptable status.<sup>23</sup> In New Orleans, graduation rates are increasing, with more students taking the ACT and earning college-ready scores than ever before.<sup>24</sup> In fact, average ACT scores in New Orleans are improving at a faster rate than state or national scores.<sup>25</sup> The achievement gap between New Orleans and the rest of the state has been cut by 70 percent.<sup>26</sup>

The 2013 Brookings Institution Education Choice and Competition Index (which ranks large school districts based on school choice policy and practices in 13 categories) found the New Orleans Recovery School District to be number one in the country. It was also the only district to receive an A.<sup>27</sup>

A similar approach has also been adopted recently in Tennessee, where it has had a profound effect on the public school system, particularly in Memphis:

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<sup>22</sup> Texas Legislature Online, Bill Analysis for SB 1718 (83R, 2013).

<sup>22</sup> SB 1718 (relating to state interventions and sanctions against public school campuses with unacceptable performance and the establishment of the Texas Achievement School District for educating students at certain low-performing campuses) passed the Senate 26-5.

<sup>23</sup> “The Louisiana Recovery School District: Lessons for the Buckeye State,” Thomas B. Fordham Institute, January 2012. <http://www.coweninstitute.com/our-work/applied-research/education-archive/education-transformation-archive/the-louisiana-recovery-school-district-lessons-for-the-buckeye-state/>

<sup>24</sup> “A Promising Solution for Struggling Schools,” McShane & Shuls, *U.S. News and World Report*, January 9, 2014.

<sup>25</sup> “The State of Public Education in New Orleans 2013,” Cowen institute. [http://www.coweninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/2013\\_SPENO\\_Final2.pdf](http://www.coweninstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/2013_SPENO_Final2.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> “A Promising Solution for Struggling Schools,” McShane & Shuls, *U.S. News and World Report*, January 9, 2014.

<sup>27</sup> “The 2013 Education Choice and Competition Index,” Grover J. Whitehurst and Sarah Whitfield, Jan 8, 2014. [http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2014/ecci\\_2013](http://www.brookings.edu/research/interactives/2014/ecci_2013)

At the heart of these changes is the state-run Achievement School District, created in 2010 with the intent of turning around Tennessee’s lowest-performing schools. Some of the schools are run by state-appointed officials; others are turned over to charter operators. Of the 16 schools pulled into the Achievement District so far, 15 of them are in Memphis. A locally elected school board continues to run most of the city’s schools, and the city also has charter schools that are independent of the Achievement District...<sup>28</sup>

The Tennessee Achievement School District has the goal of raising the bottom five percent of school districts in the state to the top 25 percent within five years.

The Texas proposal differs from the Tennessee approach in that it would be an ongoing effort to improve only the very worst elementary school campuses in the state. Focusing on elementary schools will allow the ASD to focus on students during the early phase of education when a child’s foundation for learning is first laid. Elementary grades K-5 play a critical role in a child’s educational development. Education policies and practices must strengthen the emphasis placed on this pivotal stage of a child’s development in a way that recognizes needs in order to optimize academic learning.

Under the proposed Texas ASD model, each year, the bottom fifteen elementary public or public charter school campuses with an F rating—or the equivalent thereof—for two consecutive years in TEA’s accountability ratings would be transferred into the ASD for a period of three years.

The Commissioner of Education would initially appoint one superintendent of the ASD, who would report to the Commissioner. The superintendent would have broad discretion over personnel and other aspects of the operation of the schools, including deciding which educators to retain and not retain, and whether to involve charter operators at the ASD school campuses. The superintendent would operate independently of both TEA and must not be an employee of, or affiliated with private or charter operators.

After a campus has been under ASD control for three years, the Commissioner must determine whether to either (1) direct the ASD to enter into an agreement under which the campus is returned to its prior district, or (2) keep the campus under the jurisdiction of the ASD. Parents would be able to petition the Commissioner to express their preference, and the Commissioner must give weight to the parent petition. Any agreement to return the campus to its original school district may include provisions that require the school district to retain academic programs, personnel, and operating methods employed by the ASD that provided the basis for the academic improvement of the campus. Parents of students attending a campus that remains in the ASD beyond the initial three year period would be authorized to petition the Commissioner in this way every three years to express their preference for keeping the campus in the ASD or returning it to its prior district.

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<sup>28</sup> “When Outsiders Take Over Schools,” Sarah Carr. *The Atlantic*. October 29, 2013. <http://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2013/10/when-outsiders-take-over-schools-lessons-from-memphis/280919/>

## Classroom and Campus Leadership

### Encourage effective teaching

Recommendation: Ensure that bonuses paid to school districts for passing scores on AP and IB exams are transferred directly to teachers.

The Advanced Placement (AP) Program and the International Baccalaureate (IB) Diploma Programme make rigorous, college-level academic content available to high school students.<sup>29</sup> Research has shown a strong correlation between AP performance and college outcomes, and students who perform well on an AP Exam tend to outperform non-AP test-takers in subsequent courses, even after controlling for academic preparedness.<sup>30</sup> Acceleration programs can reduce state higher education costs and make classroom space available for other students, as well as provide students with wider course options and more in-depth study.<sup>31</sup>

AP exams are administered towards the end of the school year in May. Students who have taken AP courses can choose to sign up for as many exams as they wish, although students can sign up for the test without having taken the course.<sup>32</sup> Many schools will have an AP coordinator, who assists students in signing up for the exam, collects fees, and informs students of the time and location of the exams.<sup>33</sup> Depending on the score received and what scores a college will accept, a student may receive college course credit. See a current list of the AP exams offered:

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<sup>29</sup> "Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Examination Results in Texas 2010-2011," Texas Education Agency, June 2011.

<sup>30</sup> "The Relationship Between AP Exam Performance and College Outcomes," Krista D. Mattern, Emily J. Shaw, and Xinhui Xiong, College Board, 2009. <https://research.collegeboard.org/sites/default/files/publications/2012/7/researchreport-2009-4-relationship-between-ap-exam-performance-college-outcomes.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> "Modifying Advanced Placement Program Incentive Funding Could Produce Significant Cost Savings," OPPAGA, Feb 2009. <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/MonitorDocs/Reports/pdf/0912rpt.pdf>

<sup>32</sup> <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/takingtheexam/registering-for-exams>

<sup>33</sup> <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/takingtheexam/registering-for-exams>



## List of AP Exams

|  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Arts</b>                              | <b>English</b>                        |
| AP Art History                           | AP English Language & Composition     |
| AP Music Theory                          | AP English Literature & Composition   |
| AP Studio Art: 2-D Design                |                                       |
| AP Studio Art: 3-D Design                |                                       |
| AP Studio Art: Drawing                   |                                       |
|  | <b>Sciences</b>                       |
|  | AP Biology                            |
|  | AP Chemistry                          |
|  | AP Environmental Science              |
|  | AP Physics B                          |
|  | AP Physics C: Electricity & Magnetism |
|  | AP Physics C: Mechanics               |
|  | AP Physics 1                          |
|  | AP Physics 2                          |
| <b>Math &amp; Computer Science</b>       |                                       |
| AP Calculus AB                           |                                       |
| AP Calculus BC                           |                                       |
| AP Computer Science A                    |                                       |
| AP Statistics                            |                                       |
|  |                                       |
| <b>History &amp; Social Science</b>      | <b>World Languages &amp; Cultures</b> |
| AP Comparative Government & Politics     | AP Chinese Language & Culture         |
| AP European History                      | AP French Language & Culture          |
| AP Human Geography                       | AP German Language & Culture          |
| AP Macroeconomics                        | AP Italian Language & Culture         |
| AP Microeconomics                        | AP Japanese Language & Culture        |
| AP Psychology                            | AP Latin                              |
| AP United States Government and Politics | AP Spanish Language & Culture         |
| AP United States History                 | AP Spanish Literature & Culture       |
| AP World History                         |                                       |

Source: College Board<sup>34</sup>

<sup>34</sup> <https://apstudent.collegeboard.org/apcourse>

In 1995, lawmakers approved the Texas Advanced Placement Incentive Program to “recognize and reward those students, teachers, and schools that demonstrate success in achieving the state’s educational goals.”<sup>35</sup> The grant of any award or subsidy under the Texas AP Incentive Program is subject to the availability of funds, which can include donations, grants, or legislative appropriations.<sup>36</sup>

The program funds six types of awards, though currently only one type is being funded to provide teachers a subsidy for Pre-AP, AP, Pre-IB, or IB teacher training.<sup>37</sup> The Incentive Program also provides subsidies to cover a portion of the exam fee for students who demonstrate financial need.<sup>38 39</sup>

Lawmakers in the 83rd Legislative Session appropriated \$16,300,000 to the Texas Advanced Placement Initiative and for pre-Advanced Placement/International Baccalaureate activities in the 2014-2015 budget.<sup>40</sup> In expending these funds, the TEA has been charged with prioritizing examination fee subsidies.<sup>41</sup> The legislature also charged TEA with ensuring that funds are allocated to support teacher training in an amount not less than the amount expended for teacher training in the 2010-2011 biennium.<sup>42</sup>

Texas high school students in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades took 374,091 AP exams during the 2011-2012 school year. Students earned passing scores on 47.9 percent of those exams, ranking Texas 43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation in terms of passage rates.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, while the number of 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders taking at least one AP exam in Texas was higher than in the previous school year, AP examinees constituted just 35.2 percent of total enrollment in 2011-2012. Colleges and universities use AP exam scores to make class placement decisions and to award college credit to incoming students who meet qualifying standards based on exams scores.<sup>44</sup> According to estimates from the College Board, if the 34,564 students who received a five on an AP exam in 2012 enrolled in one of Texas’ flagship universities and were awarded course credit for their scores, they would save between \$36.7 million and \$42.9 in tuition costs.<sup>45</sup> These savings grow by millions of dollars if students apply and receive credit for scores of three or four.<sup>46</sup> In addition to earning college credit, students who participate in an AP course are 62 percent more likely to graduate from college in four years.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> TEC §28.052

<sup>36</sup> TEC §28.057

<sup>37</sup> “Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate Examination Results in Texas 2010-2011,” Texas Education Agency, June 2011.

<sup>38</sup> TEC §28.054.

<sup>39</sup> <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=3822>

<sup>40</sup> S.B. No. 1 General Appropriations Bill, 83rd Texas Legislative Session (2013).

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*

<sup>42</sup> TEC §28.053

<sup>43</sup> Texas Education Agency Division of Research and Analysis, Advanced Placement (AP) Examination Results, Grades 11 and 12, by State and for the United States, Table 3, August 2013.

<sup>44</sup> Texas Education Agency Division of Research and Analysis, Advanced Placement (AP) Examination Results, Grades 11 and 12, by State and for the United States, August 2013.

<sup>45</sup> “Advanced Placement participation and scores increase in Texas,” TEA News Release, Oct. 9, 2012.

<http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=2147509430>

<sup>46</sup> *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> “Florida’s Focus on Preparation for Success in College.” Foundation for Excellence in Education. 2014.

While the fact that more students are taking AP exams is encouraging, more can be done to ensure students receive the instruction and preparation they need to earn a passing score. In order to maximize the return on its investment in AP and IB programs and help students realize measurable gains and cost savings in the future, Texas needs to incentivize better performance on AP and IB exams. One proven means of improving student scores on AP and IB exams, particularly among rural and minority student populations, is through direct bonus payments to AP teachers for each student who scores a 3 or higher on an AP exam or a 4 or higher on an IB exam.<sup>48</sup>

Texas should demonstrate its commitment to graduating more college-ready seniors by passing legislation to incentivize rigor and support the administration of the PSAT/NMSQT and AP Incentive Funding. The Incentive funding would be used to support AP course instruction (including exam fees) and provide fiscal incentives in the form of bonuses directly to AP teachers for each student who earns a passing score. Under this plan, teachers would be awarded a \$50 bonus for every passing student score, up to \$2,000 each year. Teachers in campuses rated a D or F will be awarded an additional \$500 bonus for the first student passing score, and \$50 for each additional passing score, up to \$2,000 each year. Rewarding teachers for their work in the classroom ties incentive pay directly to performance and, similar to earlier proposals relating to enhanced opportunities for professional development, provides teachers with the necessary support and motivation to be effective in the classroom.

**Recommendation:** Support UTeach and similar programs that endeavor to recruit and prepare STEM majors for the teaching profession.

The UTeach program focuses on preparing talented math and science majors for teaching careers in secondary education.<sup>49</sup> UTeach originated at The University of Texas at Austin and has since been replicated at 33 universities in 16 states, including the University of Houston and the University of North Texas. The UTeach model was developed to attract bright and talented undergraduates from the diverse science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) majors and prepare them to become secondary science, mathematics and computer science teachers.<sup>50</sup> The UTeach program at UT-Austin certifies approximately 75 students annually to teach high school math, science or computer science.<sup>51</sup> Roughly 90% of program graduates enter the teaching profession, and more than 80% of graduates who enter the profession are still in schools five years later.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Florida's AP Program and Partnership with College Board is one example of an initiative that has had a demonstrable impact on improving AP participation and scores.

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<sup>49</sup> UTeach Programs Nationwide: <http://uteach-institute.org/community/uteach-programs-listing-by-state>

<sup>50</sup> "UTeach Elements of Success." [http://www.uteach-institute.org/files/uploads/uteach\\_institute\\_EOS.pdf](http://www.uteach-institute.org/files/uploads/uteach_institute_EOS.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> "We Prepare Teachers, They Change the World," The UTeach Institute Brochure.

<http://content.yudu.com/Library/A1ydyby/TheUTeachInstituteWe/resources/index.htm?referrerUrl=>

<sup>52</sup> *Id.*

Hallmarks of the UTeach Program include integrated, research-based professional development, as well as compact degree plans that allow students to graduate with both a math or science degree and teacher certification in four years.<sup>53</sup> Other universities with programs similar to UTeach include Texas A&M and Texas State University.

Institutions of higher education are tasked with preparing the next generation of educators. Texas is currently experiencing a shortage of qualified secondary math and science teachers.<sup>54</sup> While programs like UTeach are working to alleviate this scarcity, those efforts could be augmented by additional state support. Induction services provide new teachers with necessary support during their first two years of teaching. While UT-Austin's UTeach program has been able to maintain a student-teacher coordinator to facilitate induction support to graduates of the program, other schools have had to reduce or eliminate this valuable offering. The first year of teaching is rife with new obstacles. Supporting new teachers as they navigate this often-trying time can have a high impact on teacher retention in subsequent years. Accordingly, the state, through TEA and higher education institutions, should invest in providing induction support to new STEM teachers with a \$1 million appropriation. This appropriation would be administered by UTeach Austin, or a similar entity, and support STEM teacher preparation programs around the state.

Another unique and integral aspect of the UTeach model is the Mentor Teacher program, which allows students in the first year of the program to work with a master teacher in developing a lesson plan that the students then teach to a participating high school science class. Not only do the mentor teachers offer valuable instruction and training, they also serve as the liaison between districts and UTeach, and provide the student-teachers with valuable written feedback. At UTeach Austin, the mentor teaching program costs roughly \$200,000 annually. Due to budgetary constraints, the program is supported through endowment funding; however, at schools with fewer resources, mentor teacher opportunities have been eliminated altogether. With \$1 million in additional funding, more programs statewide could implement this important form of practical professional development.

Finally, making funding available for student internships benefits the community in multiple ways. UTeach Austin's budget includes \$400,000 for student internships, through which program participants volunteer with local nonprofits, such as the Boys and Girls Club, to offer math and science tutoring and learning enrichment activities. The participants are compensated through the program. The outcomes of these internships benefit the local nonprofits and the communities they serve, which are often in low-income areas. Meanwhile, the UTeach participants, who may come from low-income families themselves, receive necessary financial support to help pay for their educations. Programs like this should be encouraged, and the state should explore its options to incentivize more schools to implement teacher internships, providing up to \$2 million in funding for the biennium as needed.

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<sup>53</sup> *Id.*

<sup>54</sup> "Closing the Gaps by 2015: Update on Progress." Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, Jan. 31 2011.

Recommendation: Increase appropriations to TEA that support the Teach for America program.

Teach for America (TFA) is a nonprofit organization that recruits high-achieving college graduates, known as “corps members,” to teach in some of the country’s most underserved schools for a minimum two-year commitment. One national, randomized evaluation found that students with a TFA teacher performed better in math than those with a non-TFA teacher.<sup>55</sup> TFA teachers also produce higher effects in math in their first year compared to other novice educators.<sup>56</sup> A Stanford University study of Teach for America in Houston ISD schools found that on average, the impact of a TFA teacher was positive.<sup>57</sup> Teach for America’s admissions process is highly selective; in 2011 only 11 percent of applicants were selected to be corps members.<sup>58</sup> In Texas, Teach For America provides a critical source of well-trained teachers who are trained and motivated to help break the local cycle of educational inequity. Corps members teach for two years in low-income schools in Houston, San Antonio, Rio Grande Valley, and Dallas-Fort Worth, routinely going above and beyond traditional expectations to help their students achieve at high levels.<sup>59</sup> In a 2011 survey of 225 principals employing corps members in Texas, an overwhelming majority had positive impressions of the program<sup>60</sup>:

- 95 percent reported that TFA teachers hold high expectations for kids.
- 91 percent reported that corps members were having a greater impact on student achievement than more experienced teachers.
- 89 percent indicated they would hire a Teach for America teacher to fill a teacher vacancy.

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<sup>55</sup> “The Effects of Teach For America on Students: Findings from a National Evaluation,” Paul T. Decker, Daniel P. Mayer, Steven Glazerman, Mathematica Policy Research, June 9 2004. <http://www.mathematica-mpr.com/publications/pdfs/teach.pdf>

<sup>56</sup> “SDP Human Capital Diagnostic: Los Angeles Unified School District,” Strategic Data Project at Center for Education Policy Research at Harvard University, Nov 2012. <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/cepr-resources/files/news-events/sdp-laUSD-hc.pdf>

<sup>57</sup> “Teach for America: An Evaluation of Teacher Differences and Student Outcomes in Houston, Texas,” Margaret Raymond, Stephen Fletcher, and Javier Luque, Credo at Hoover Institution at Stanford University, July 2001. <http://credo.stanford.edu/downloads/tfa.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> “Education Headlines Teach for America teachers leaving Dallas ISD exceed national attrition rate,” Tawnell D. Hobbs, *Dallas News*, Nov 12, 2011. <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20111112-teach-for-america-teachers-leaving-dallas-isd-exceed-national-attrition-rate.ece>

<sup>59</sup> OneStar Foundation: Ameri\*Corps Texas Grantees 2013-2014. <http://onestarfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/2013-14-AmeriCorps-Program-Descriptions-and-Contact-Info.pdf>

<sup>60</sup> Teach for America: Special Update on Texas’ Strategic Investment in Teach for America

Teach for America receives financial support from a variety of private and public sources, including large institutional backers and a mix of federal, state and local funding. In Texas, TFA receives state funding in the form of legislative appropriations through the Texas Education Agency. Currently, appropriated funds designated for supporting TFA are administered to the organization through a contract with the TEA. Teach for America submits a project proposal in the fall, and provides progress reports during the contract year and at the end of the contract cycle. Funds are dispersed as a reimbursement after an expenditure has been made. These funds support the organization's programmatic operations, which may largely be defined as: recruitment, selection and admissions, summer training, and ongoing training and support. The program is also a recipient of AmeriCorps\*Texas grant funding administered through the OneStar Foundation.<sup>61</sup>

In 2007, Commissioner Scott dedicated \$1,500,000 of his discretionary budget to support TFA's operations in Texas, which at the time were limited to Houston and the Rio Grande Valley. Starting in 2009, TFA began to receive an appropriation under Title III: Texas Education Agency.<sup>62</sup> This support continued into subsequent legislative sessions and reached \$12,000,000 in the most recent budget cycle.<sup>63</sup> It is the Legislature's intent that at least 1,000 TFA teachers be employed in Texas schools serving an above average proportion of economically disadvantaged students.<sup>64</sup> According to TFA reports, this year, there are 1,256 corps members teaching in the four regions of the state where the program operates.<sup>65</sup>

Due to funding from the state, TFA was able to expand its operations to the Dallas-Fort Worth and San Antonio communities. Texas' investment in Teach for America has furthered its large educational reform effort by increasing the number of effective teachers. School districts in Texas have come to depend on Teach for America as a vital component driving district improvement plans. By investing in TFA, the state is able to leverage significant resources from private contributors to improve student outcomes and close the achievement gap.

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<sup>61</sup> OneStar Foundation: Ameri\*Corps Texas Grantees 2013-2014. <http://onestarfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/2013-14-AmeriCorps-Program-Descriptions-and-Contact-Info.pdf>

<sup>62</sup> TEA Rider 84, General Appropriations Act 2010-2011, 81st Legislative Session, III-26.

<sup>63</sup> TEA Rider 49, General Appropriations Act 2014-2015, 83rd Legislative Session, III-16.

<sup>64</sup> TEA Rider 49, General Appropriations Act 2014-2015, 83rd Legislative Session, III-16.

<sup>65</sup> <http://www.teachforamerica.org>

While discussions of expansion into new regions have temporarily been placed on hold, by increasing appropriations to the Teach for America program, the state could augment the sustainability of the organization's operations in Texas. Specifically, additional financial support would allow the organization to strengthen its regional strategic plans. School districts enter into agreements with TFA and pay the salaries of corps members they hire.<sup>66</sup> Stronger regional strategic plans increase the likelihood that TFA's Texas regions will be able to receive a sufficient allocation of corps members from the national recruitment and training processes to meet the demand for teacher candidates reported by partnering districts. Importantly, Teach for America's regional teams work to cover their costs locally, as opposed to relying on funding from the national organization. This requires a high degree of buy-in from the community. Some regions are able to achieve more readily than others, in which case appropriations from the legislature can help cover the difference.

Teach for America is a catalyst for improving teaching and provides a valuable pipeline of transformational leaders at all levels of the education system and has great potential to expand its impact on student achievement. Texas must deepen its commitment to education reform by continuing to provide financial support to Teach for America in the upcoming biennium by appropriating \$15 million, a \$3 million increase over existing funding levels, to TEA to support the Teach for America program.

**Recommendation:** Create Reading-to-Learn Academies for professional educators in the fourth and fifth grades with a curriculum focused teaching strategy to improve comprehension across all subjects.

The notion that reading is central to learning must constitute a cornerstone of any K-12 education policy. Learning to read and comprehend material well in elementary school lays the foundation for future success in secondary and higher education and into adulthood and a career. There is an abundance of research available today that illuminates how children learn to read and how schools can enhance that process. This research can help guide professional development opportunities for teachers in grades K-3 to help students learn to read. Research-based professional development is equally as important for teachers in the fourth and fifth grades, as these later grades typically mark the time in a child's education when he or she is expected to start "reading to learn", as opposed to simply learning to read.<sup>67</sup>

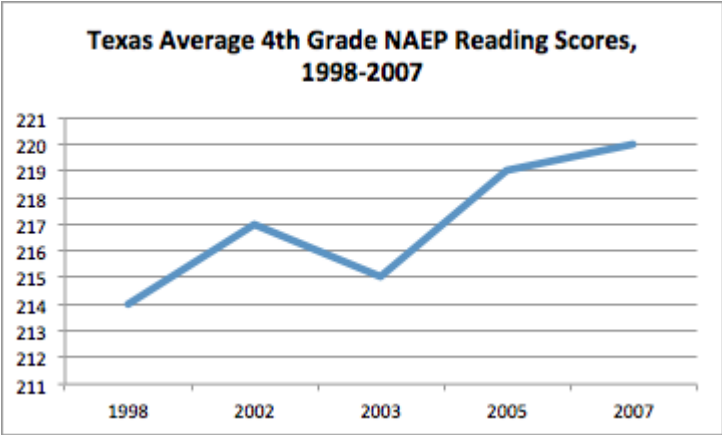
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<sup>66</sup> "Education Headlines Teach for America teachers leaving Dallas ISD exceed national attrition rate," Tawnell D. Hobbs, *Dallas News*, Nov 12, 2011. <http://www.dallasnews.com/news/education/headlines/20111112-teach-for-america-teachers-leaving-dallas-isd-exceed-national-attrition-rate.ece>

<sup>67</sup> Sanacore, J., & Palumbo, A. (2008, December). Understanding the fourth-grade slump: Our point of view. In *The Educational Forum* (Vol. 73, No. 1, pp. 67-74). Taylor & Francis Group.

Written language imparts new vocabulary, language patterns, ideas, concepts, and ways of thinking. Reading to learn involves more than children’s ability to quickly and easily recognize letters and words. The key to helping students master this important skill is building *comprehension* and inferential thinking. Children must be taught comprehension strategies that they can apply while thinking critically about what they are reading. Comprehension strategies help children derive enjoyment and enrichment from reading and build on their knowledge of the world while improving language skills.

Implementing comprehension strategies inside the classroom requires educators who are knowledgeable in effective instructional practices. The most influential teachers take part in frequent and relevant professional development offerings which focus on the implementation of high quality classroom reading instruction designed to meet the needs of all children.



Source: NAEP<sup>68</sup>

The state should provide funding in the amount of \$15 million per year for Reading-to-Learn Academies, designed to help teachers in grades 4 and 5 master the tenets of careful and consistent systematic reading instruction. Teachers who participate will learn how to provide reading comprehension instruction that involves frequent interactions with students, as well as constructive feedback. Teachers who complete a Reading-to-Learn Academy training will be receiving a stipend to cover travel expenses. In addition to the training participants receive during the four-day program, the entire academy program, including lesson plans and training modules, would be available through online portals. Web portals have been shown to effectively supplement the face-to-face training teachers completed in the Academy setting.

<sup>68</sup> NAEP State Profiles. <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/states/>



**Support effective principals through professional development**

Recommendation: Provide for a public education campus leadership program to train principals and other campus leadership staff.

Every classroom requires a quality teacher, and every school requires a skilled principal. There are approximately 325,000 teachers in Texas in roughly 8,500 public schools. Each school requires a senior executive who knows how to lead teachers, to promote an environment of upward mobility for students, and who can oversee a host of business logistics. Creating a pipeline that prepares people for these careers and creating incentives that promote excellence within them is an absolute necessity.

Principals typically oversee somewhere between 20-60 direct employees (compared to a private sector average of eight, or a military average of three) and manage multi-million dollar budgets. For example:

**2011-2012 Financial Data by Campus**

| District                  | School            | Number of Students | Total Expenditures - All Funds |
|---------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Houston ISD               | Bellaire HS       | 3,470              | \$20,088,461                   |
| Dallas ISD                | North Dallas HS   | 1,287              | \$10,236,287                   |
| Cypress-Fairbanks ISD     | Bleyl MS          | 1,562              | \$8,151,882                    |
| Austin ISD                | Lamar MS          | 565                | \$5,317,125                    |
| Katy ISD                  | Franz Elementary  | 890                | \$6,327,706                    |
| Northside ISD San Antonio | Fisher Elementary | 1,041              | \$6,180,658                    |

Source: TEA<sup>69</sup>

Principal preparation programs are, in theory, designed to ensure that aspiring principals develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for job success. Lately, there has been progress in identifying the core programmatic elements that the most effective principal preparation programs have in common and how those programs are designed to prepare principals who can improve student achievement. Texas, which has 77 approved Principal Preparation programs and granted 3,752 principal licenses in 2010-2011, must do a better job of incorporating these components into university and non-university based programs.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>69</sup> TEA Campus Financial Budget Reports 2013: [http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/school.finance/forecasting/financial\\_reports/1213\\_camp\\_budget.html](http://ritter.tea.state.tx.us/school.finance/forecasting/financial_reports/1213_camp_budget.html)  
<sup>70</sup> AREL 2012 Principal Policy Snapshot: Texas, George W. Bush Institute. [http://www.bushcenter.org/sites/default/files/Snapshot%20Texas%20FINAL\\_4.pdf](http://www.bushcenter.org/sites/default/files/Snapshot%20Texas%20FINAL_4.pdf)

These types of training programs will engender the types of cultural changes that are necessary in the public school system. A broad, cultural change is needed in order to ensure that we are setting very high expectations of students, parents and teachers. This change can be built on four pillars:

- A renewed emphasis on character traits – such as curiosity, grit, self-control, gratitude—that lead to academic achievement and success in life.
- Infuse in the campus environment a singular focus on college preparedness and graduation.
- Stress the importance of parental involvement.
- Students must learn to achieve as individuals while also learning to work collaboratively.

This type of emphasis is common at many of Texas’ most successful charter schools.<sup>71</sup> As a KIPP charter school document notes:

Building off of a research partnership between KIPP NYC and Dr. Angela Duckworth (University of Pennsylvania), KIPP is now especially focused on seven highly predictive strengths: zest, grit, self-control, optimism, gratitude, social intelligence, and curiosity. We’ve integrated our own experiences as teachers with the research of Seligman, Peterson, and Duckworth to create a road map for the development of each strength. For example, to help teachers, kids, and parents develop grit we ask them to reflect on whether they try very hard after experiencing failure. KIPP schools around the country are now focused on how we can integrate a more structured and measurable approach to character development.<sup>72</sup>

These types of cultural changes can only be driven from the local level by ensuring that campus leaders have the skills they need to successfully spearhead such reforms. That is why it is critical to make this training available to principals and other campus leaders so that they have the tools they need to be successful.

Along similar lines, the Rice University Jones Graduate School of Business runs an Education Entrepreneurship Program (REEP), which “combines a business education from the Rice University MBA program with an intensive PK-12 leadership development curriculum.”<sup>73</sup> The program is open to teachers, assistant principals, and principals and offers a variety of tracks to certification, each of which ensures that participants are trained in “all aspects of organizational management, including: strategy, operations, accounting, finance, marketing, decision-making, and leadership.”

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<sup>71</sup> Character at KIPP: <http://www.kipp.org/our-approach/character>

<sup>72</sup> *Id.*

<sup>73</sup> REEP Program Overview.

The state should help enable public school principals to receive training via existing campus leadership programs of the sort offered by KIPP Charter School and Rice University. During the last legislative session, lawmakers set aside funding in the 2014-2015 budget for improving educator quality and leadership.<sup>74</sup> A rider directed the Commissioner of Education to set aside funds in an amount not to exceed \$5 million for the purpose of implementing standards related to educator preparation and principal quality. While statewide standards are necessary and important, standards alone do not train principals or prepare them to be effective leaders. KIPP already offers a range of campus leadership training programs, targeted at both principals and other school leadership positions. KIPP is also launching a Leadership Design Fellowship Program that offers administrators of public school districts and charter school districts the opportunity to undertake principal development training.<sup>75</sup>

To improve campus leadership, the state should offer financial support that enables public school principals and others in leadership positions to receive optional advanced leadership training through partnerships with organizations such as KIPP and Rice University.

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<sup>74</sup> Senate Bill 1, General Appropriations Act, 83rd Legislative Session, 2013.

<sup>75</sup> KIPP Leadership Design Fellowship Program Overview.